

SWAC
WASTE REDUCTION/RECYCLING SUBCOMMITTEE
Friday, October 15, 2004 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Subcommittee Members Attending:

Mark Hooper, Chair
Robert Beckwith
Steve Goldstein
Shirley Shimada
Judy Stenberg

Staff/Guests:

Kris Beatty
Lauren Cole
Dan Farrell
Jeff Gaisford
Chris Paulson
Bill Reed
Alexandra Thompson

1. **Wood Markets.** Kris Beatty, Division staff, provided an update to the subcommittee on the Solid Waste Division's Wood Markets Project. The purpose of the project is to determine which approaches the Division should undertake to divert wood from landfill disposal by improving markets for reusable and recyclable wood.

Wood represents 9% of waste disposed in King County. Roughly 56% of this disposed wood that is readily recyclable or usable as hog fuel. There are two primary types of wood waste:

- *Urban wood* includes scrap dimensional lumber, pallets, crates, manufacturing scrap, roofing and siding, and engineered wood. Much of the material comes from construction and demolition. About 73% of this material is recycled or put to beneficial use, but about 73,000 tons per year are still disposed.
- *Green wood* is landclearing and logging debris and tree trimming wastes. The majority of green wood is managed outside the solid waste system, with only about 3,500 tons per year disposed in King County public and private transfer stations.

The greatest opportunity for decreasing disposal of wood waste is by increasing beneficial use of the urban wood waste stream. Currently, 80% of recovered urban wood goes to hog fuel.

The Woods Market Project was initiated in 2003. The research phase of the project has been completed. A copy of the Research Summary Report,

Recovery and Recycling of Wood Waste in King County, is available from the Division upon request.

Currently the project is in the planning phase. A number of approaches have been identified as well as criteria for analyzing these approaches. The general categories of approaches under consideration are:

- *Policy evaluation/development* (such as contracting standards to promote salvage in King County projects; and/or disposal bans on clean urban wood)
- *Public/private/non-profit partnership development* (such as partnerships with building contractors; and/or pilot program with finger-joint lumber manufacturer)
- *Outreach/education/promotion* (such as deconstruction how-to guide for do-it-yourselfers; and/or promotion of salvaged wood for green building)
- *Technical assistance* (such as assistance with evaluation and implementation for screening treated wood; and/or assisting milling companies to use urban wood in their products)

Criteria for analyzing approaches include feasibility; effectiveness in reducing disposal rates; effectiveness in increasing demand for and/or availability of wood; cost; and ability to quantify results.

Planning is expected to be completed by early 2005, and projects selected for implementation. The Division has requested \$81,000 in 2005 for this project.

The subcommittee had several comments about the project, including the following:

- Contamination is fairly extensive in the wood recycling industry, and that the trend toward commingled collection is increasing the problem.
- The Division should partner with the Master Builders Association and stores like Home Depot to provide outreach about wood recycling.
- Community college and other school wood crafting shops could be a potential market for some reused or recycled wood.
- States with mandatory recycling such as California seem to be making better progress.

- Demand for hog fuel should improve due to increasing energy costs.
- Demolition contractors often only want one commingled box.
- To make gains in wood recycling, you either need to make it really easy for people to recycle or provide a monetary incentive.

2. **Mercury Switch Removal.** Dan Farrell and Alexandra Thompson, Division staff, provided a presentation on Local Hazardous Waste Management Programs (LHWMP) to remove mercury switches from vehicles. These switches are located in hoods and trunk lids. When the lids are lifted, a mercury bead makes an electrical contact to turn on a convenience light. Each switch contains 1.2 grams of mercury.

Automakers began installing mercury switches in 1973-1974. Typically, these switches have not been removed prior to recycling of scrap vehicles. A new report by Clean Car Campaign estimates that over 259,000 pounds of mercury have been released into the environment over the past 30 years from retired vehicles. The high level of mercury in the environment has resulted in 45 states issuing fish consumption advisories relating to mercury contamination.

In 2003, the three largest United States auto manufacturers agreed to discontinue use of mercury switches. Japanese and European manufacturers stopped using them ten years ago.

The LHWMP vehicle program has two components: the Fleets Program and the End-of-Life (ELV) Program.

The Fleets Program includes 9 public shops – including King County Solid Waste Division, Metro Transit, and KC Motor Pool – and one private fleet, the AAA of Washington. The objective of this program is to get fleets to safely remove and replace mercury switches before the vehicle is retired or auctioned off. AAA of Washington is offering free removal or replacement to its members. By the end of this year, 500 switches are expected to be removed because of this program.

The ELV Program is centered around development of legislation that would place responsibility for removal and disposal of mercury upon vehicle manufacturers. The Division is working with non-profit agencies and the automotive recycling industry to develop this legislation.

The subcommittee commented that over-emphasis on the Fleets Program might tend to undercut the ELV Program since auto manufacturers might portray the program as a better approach than manufacture responsibility.